Rashi on Zephaniah
רש"י על צפניה
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Rashi on Zephaniah

Chapter 1

Verse 1

Verse 2

I will totally destroy An expression of destruction, as in (Jud. 18:25) "and you will lose your life," mentioned regarding Micah. The "aleph" is defective in the second word, for it should have been written אֶאֱסֹף There are many [defective alephs] like these, as in (Isa. 13:20) "no Arab shall pitch his tent there," which is like יְאָהֵל.

Verse 3

and the stumbling blocks with the wicked They are the pagan deities.

Verse 4

the remnant of Baal that there shall be no remnant of its remembrance. the name of the idolatrous priests with the ancillary priests Their worshippers with their priests.

Verse 5

who swear by the Lord and go back and swear by their king, their pagan deity. They make the pagan deity the main one, saying, "If you do not believe the oath by God, I swear to you by the pagan deity."

Verse 6

Verse 7

He has invited His guests He prepared His armies for the appointed day.

Verse 8

gentile garb Ornaments of the idols.

Verse 9

who leaps over the threshold Jonathan renders: who follows the customs of the Philistines, who would not step on the threshold of Dagon, as it is stated (I Sam. 5:5): “Therefore, the priests of Dagon... do not tread, etc.”

Verse 10

from the fish gate Jonathan renders: from the gate of the fish; there was a gate in Jerusalem called by that name.
from the second gate from the gate of the fowl, which was second to it [the fish gate].

Verse 11

you inhabitants of Maktesh The Kidron Valley, which is as deep as a mortar. This is according to Targum Jonathan. from the fish gate This is Acre, situated in the bosom of the sea, where many fish are caught.
from the Mishneh This is Lod, which is second to Jerusalem.
from the hills This is Sepphoris, which is situated at the tops of the mountains like a bird.
inhabitants of Maktesh This is Tiberias, which is deeper than all of [the rest of] the land of Israel.
for the entire people of Canaan is cut off Jonathan renders: For the entire nation, whose deeds resemble the deeds of the people of the land of Canaan, has been broken.
all those laden with silver Jonathan renders: All those wealthy with property, laden with a burden of silver and gold; as in (Prov. 27:3) “The weight of stone, the burden of sand” an expression of a burden.

Verse 12

I will search Jerusalem with candles I will judge their iniquities strictly.
who are settled float on their lees. [As in] (II Kings 6:6) “And the axe blade floated,” rendered in Aramaic: וּקְפָא פַּרְזְלָה.
who say in their heart, “The Lord shall do neither good...” to those who obey His will.
nor harm to those who transgress His will.

Verse 13

Verse 14

wherein the mighty man cries bitterly The mighty man will cry out with a bitter voice.

Verse 15

a day of ruin, an expression of desolation.
and desolation A greater degree of desolation.

Verse 16

Verse 17

And I will bring distress upon men Upon Israel, who is called “man.”

and their flesh their flesh. In Arabic, flesh is called al laham.
like dung dung.

Chapter 2

Verse 1

Gather yourselves together Gather and assemble together as in (Exod. 5:12) "To Gather a gathering."
gather together your deeds. Conform your deeds to the will of Your Maker.
O nation that has no desire That has no desire to return to the Torah.

Verse 2

before the decree is born Before the arrival of the decree.
as chaff that passes... the sun This is an ellipsis for, "As chaff that passes from before the wind, and as smoke that passes from before the sun." This is the translation of עָבַר יוֹם, that passes the sun. In this manner, Jonathan renders: And you shall be like the chaff that the wind blows, like smoke that passes from before the sun. Another version: and like the shadow that passes, etc.; this is an expression of a shadow.

Verse 3

Verse 4

For Gaza shall be deserted For, if you will do so, [as in verse 1,] I will visit retribution upon your evil neighbors; Philistia, Ammon, and Moab. The prophet proceeds to mention them [the neighbors] in [geographical] order.
Ashdod at noon they shall drive her out Her name is Ashdod, and, at noon, when the destruction wastes, they shall drive her out, and she shall be plundered. Another explanation. At noon they shall drive her out. [Ashdod] was a place to pasture sheep, and it is hard for the sheep to go out at noontime; so Scripture says (Song 1:7): "How do you make them lie down at noon?"

Verse 5

the seacoast the border of the sea. The expression חֶבֶל is a measure of land that they measured with a rope, i.e., those close to the sea.
the nation of Cherethites the people liable to destruction. Who are the inhabitants of the seacoast of Canaan, the land of the Philistines? The Philistines, who dwell on the coast of the western sea, in the west of Eretz lsrael, within its boundaries. Although Jonathan explains this phrase homiletically as [the nation of] destruction, the nation of the Cherethites is a province of the Philistines; its name is Cherethi. So Scripture states (I Sam. 30:14) regarding Ziklag: "We made a raid upon the south of the Cherethites, etc." Jonathan translates: on the south of Cherethi. Below (ibid. 30:16) it is written: "Because of all the great spoil which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah."

Verse 6

breakfast nooks for shepherds a temporary dwelling where the shepherds eat bread in the morning. כְּרֹת is an expression related to (II Kings 6:23) “He prepared for them a lavish feast.”

Verse 7

And it shall be a lot for the remnant of the house of Judah And that border shall be a lot for the remnant. This חֶבֶל is an expression of a lot. In this manner, Jonathan rendered: And it shall be a lot for the remnant of the house of Judah.

Verse 8

who taunted My people When [the people of] Israel were being led into exile toward the land of the Chaldeans, and they were passing through Ammon and Moab, and they would see Israel weeping, sighing, and crying out, they would taunt them and say, “Why are you suffering? Aren’t you going to your father’s house? Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river from earliest times.” (Josh. 24:2)
and they aggrandized themselves on their border And they acted haughtily on their border.

Verse 9

for Moab shall be like Sodom You, too, shall return to your previous dwelling. Was not your father, Lot, from Sodom?
a rattling of nettles The sound made by the nettles growing there because there are no passersby, and they knock against each other and make sounds.
and a salt mine a place for digging salt.

Verse 10

Verse 11

for He weakened He weakened their strength.
and... shall prostrate himself to Him when they see that their deity has deteriorated.

Verse 12

You, too, Cushites When Israel was exiled there to the other side of the rivets of Cush.

Verse 13

on the north Assyria is on the north, neighboring on Babylon.
Nineveh That is the capital of Assyria.

Verse 14

all the beasts of the nations all the cattle of the nations.
the pelican and the owl birds. [owl a bird that flies at night (chouette in French), an owl.]
in its lintels rounded knobs on the top of the roof; pomels in French.
Their voice shall sing in the window The voice of the birds chirping in the windows.

desolation, in the doorpost The desolation shall be discernible in the doorposts of the house.
for the cedarwork has been destroyed For he has uprooted its cedars, as in (Ps. 137:7) “Raze it, raze it.” Jonathan rendered: And they demolished its roof. That is the roof of the house that is ceiled with cedar; even stone houses are ceiled with boards of wood.

Verse 15

and there is none besides me וְאַפְסִי

Chapter 3

Verse 1

Woe to her who is filthy and polluted Until now, Zephaniah was speaking of Ninveh, but now he refers to Jerusalem: Woe to her who is destined to be plundered and sullied like dung. It will be polluted with the filth of its iniquity. filthy as in (Lev. 1:16) “its crop”; and (Nahum 3:6) “And I will make you like dung.”
the dove like city Like a silly dove, without a heart.

Verse 2

Verse 3

wolves of the evening who hasten to devour their prey at night.
They did not leave over the bones for morning They did not leave over even the bones to gnaw in the morning.

Verse 4

they removed the Torah They did not teach it to those who inquired of them.

Verse 5

The Lord is just He caused His Shechinah to rest in their midst; therefore, He cannot look upon their evil deeds. He is just, and there is no injustice before Him.
He brings His judgment to light He judges a true judgment to its absolute truth.
But the one who commits injustice knows no shame But the unjust judges do not take it to heart, to be ashamed because of the Righteous One Who dwells among them.

Verse 6

I have cut off nations I brought retribution upon the nations so that you should see and fear as He concludes, “I said, ‘Surely you will fear Me.’”

Verse 7

I said, “Surely you will fear Me... and her dwelling shall not be cut off” Her dwellings shall not be destroyed.

all that I ordained upon her And all the good that I ordained to bring upon her shall not be cut off from her.

Verse 8

That I will rise up to meet When I will rise to meet with you.

Verse 9

Verse 10

From the other side of the rivers of Cush They will bring Me an offering.
My supplicants those who pray to me.
the community of My scattered ones The gatherings of My scattered ones, whom I scattered.

Verse 11

you shall not be ashamed of all your deeds Because you have already suffered, and your iniquity has been expiated.

Verse 12

a humble and poor people A humble people that submits to humiliation.

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

your afflictions justice in French.

Verse 16

Verse 17

A Mighty One will save He is a Mighty One, Who will save [Israel] from the enemy.
He will be silent in His love He will conceal your transgressions with His love. So did Jonathan render: He will cover your sins with His love.

Verse 18

Those who are removed from the appointed season I destroyed those removed from My appointed seasons, those who did not keep the Sabbaths and the festivals.
I have destroyed lit., I gathered in.
they were of you They were of your people.
it was a burden of shame upon her That guilt was a burden of shame to you.

Those who are removed an expression of taking out, as in (Prov. 25:4) “Take away the dross from the silver”; and (II Sam. 20:13) “When he was removed from the highway.” The only radical letter is the “gimel.”

Verse 19

Behold, I wreak destruction Jonathan rendered: Behold I wreak destruction. It may also be interpreted as an expression of crushing, as in (Mal. 3:21): “And you shall crush the wicked.”
throughout all the land where they suffered shame Every place where they were for their shame, there I will make them to be a praise and a name.